

## **OECD-MENA Women's Business Forum**

# **Policies and Services to Support Women's Entrepreneurship Development in the MENA Region**

**Government and Private Sector Responses in Times of Change**

### **Draft Agenda**

**27-28 September 2011**  
**OECD Conference Centre – 2 rue André Pascal, 75016 Paris, France**



## Background

Today, the MENA region is experiencing a period of unprecedented political and social change. Women have played a key role in the recent social movements, at the core of which have been calls for an end to rampant corruption, increased transparency and stakeholder consultations, and a policy environment more conducive to economic growth and employment. Over the last decades, many MENA governments have initiated a series of reforms in support of a stronger private sector and an improved status for women in the economic, political and social spheres. The current context represents an opportunity for emerging policy leaders to reinforce existing private sector development efforts and to give new economic actors—including women and youth—a voice in shaping public policies. There is, however, a risk that new policy leaders may call into question past efforts towards economic liberalisation and women's rights.

Over the last decades, a broad consensus has emerged among the international development community that a strong private sector is key to ensuring sustainable economic development, employment generation and competitiveness. A number of developing countries have begun to adopt policies reducing the role of the state in the economy in favour of more market-based systems. This has been supported to varying degrees by a series of reforms meant to improve macroeconomic stability, promote more predictable and business-friendly legal and regulatory environments, and increase investments in public infrastructure and education. In the framework of such strategies that aim to support private sector development and improve national competitiveness, targeted measures have been increasingly implemented in order to accelerate women's economic participation and entrepreneurial activity rates.

The economies of the Middle East and North Africa have been no exception to these trends, although the degree of economic liberalisation varies widely amongst them. In addition, political commitments to accelerate women's entrepreneurship levels have often fallen short of making real improvements to women's ability to access tailored business support and financing, or to advocate for policies, laws and regulations which take into account their business constraints and needs.

The recent social movements in MENA economies have demonstrated that continuing to improve the environment for private sector development will require overcoming a number of business climate barriers, including corruption, limited stakeholder consultations, weak business support infrastructure and limited options for external financing. They have also underlined the need to establish better policies to support women's economic integration and entrepreneurship, which are key potential sources of long term economic growth and employment generation.

## Objective

Building on previous Women's Business Forum meetings, which notably discussed means to improve women-led businesses' access to financing<sup>1</sup>, this meeting will consider how MENA economies can advance private sector development efforts through targeted policies and services to support women entrepreneurs. The meeting will examine pressing issues such as:

- 1) the role of policy advocacy in the current political context;
- 2) the importance of non-financial business support services for business creation and expansion;
- 3) the benefit of putting in place support measures to improve women's access to information and markets; and

---

<sup>1</sup> Seminar on Women in Private Equity: New Frontiers for the MENA Region, Paris, 23 May 2011 ([http://www.oecd.org/document/60/0,3746,en\\_34645207\\_43984956\\_47556284\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/60/0,3746,en_34645207_43984956_47556284_1_1_1_1,00.html)); Growing Micro and Small Enterprises: Tackling Financing Obstacles in the MENA Region, Casablanca, 22-23 February 2011; Conference on Enhancing the Business-Enabling Environment for Women in Arab Economies, Beirut, 24 November 2010 ([http://www.oecd.org/document/15/0,3746,en\\_34645207\\_43984956\\_46023119\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/15/0,3746,en_34645207_43984956_46023119_1_1_1_1,00.html));

- 4) the state of research and data collection in the MENA region and their importance for the development of well-informed policies.

The issues will be discussed in light of the findings of the draft reports for select MENA economies in the *Inventory of Policies, Institutions and Programmes Supporting Women's Enterprise in the MENA Region*. Each report gathers a wide range of information on existing support for women entrepreneurs.

OECD and MENA representatives will exchange experiences, and discuss respective policy lessons and the particularities of MENA economies in the current context.

## Meeting Documentation

*Inventory of Policies, Institutions and Programmes Supporting Women's Enterprise in the MENA Region*: draft reports for the following economies: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian Authority, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia and United Arab Emirates.

Lois Stevenson (2010): *The Role of Women's Entrepreneurship in the Middle East and North Africa Labour Market*.

Lois Stevenson (2011): *Business Support Services in the Middle East and North Africa* (tbc)

## Other Useful References

OECD (2010): *Report on the Gender Initiative: Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship* (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/7/5/48111145.pdf>)

World Bank (2010): *Gender Dimensions of Investment Climate Reform: A Guide for Policymakers and Practitioners* (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/10/43/45449146.pdf>)

Lois Stevenson (2010): *Private Sector and Enterprise Development: Fostering Growth in the Middle East and North Africa*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Inc.: Northampton, MA, USA and International Development Research Centre: Ottawa, Canada.

## Participants

The meeting will benefit from the participation of the Women's Business Forum national task force members. It will also bring together experts in the field of women's entrepreneurship development, SME policy practitioners, government representatives, and business leaders from MENA and OECD economies.

**\*Note: welcoming remarks and session 1 will be open to the press**

**27 SEPTEMBER**

<b>9h00-9h30</b>	<b>REGISTRATION</b>
<b>9h30-9h45</b>	<b>WELCOMING REMARKS</b> H.E. Ms. Karen Kornbluh, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the United States to the OECD, Co-chair of the Women's Business Forum
<b>9h45-11h15</b>	<b>SESSION 1: Adapting policy advocacy tools to respond to a changing political and economic context</b> <b>Chair:</b> H.E. Mr. Anders Ahnliid, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Sweden to the OECD <b>Speakers:</b> Ms. Neveen El Tahri, Co-Chairperson of Delta Financial Investments, Egypt Representative, Tunisia (tbd) H.E. Ms. Ibtehal Al-Zaydi, Minister of State for Women's Affairs, Iraq Ms. Najat Jumaan, Director of Business Women Department, General Federation of Trade Industry and Commerce, Yemen Mr. Joahannes Jütting, Senior Policy Analyst, Development Center, OECD <b>Roundtable Discussion</b> The issue of policy advocacy has taken on increasing importance in MENA economies, many of which are experiencing political transitions resulting in constitutional reform.  Public/private policy dialogue is key to ensuring that new policies, laws and regulations take into account the needs of the private sector. Because women entrepreneurs may face different legal and regulatory business constraints than male entrepreneurs, it is important that representatives of the businesswomen's community are given a voice in the public/private policy dialogue. Domestic and international businesswomen's associations and networks can play an important role in communicating the needs of the businesswomen's community to policy makers.  This session will discuss the opportunities and challenges for policy advocacy that arise from the current context, as well as the possible means to ensure that women continue to have a voice in shaping public policies. Emphasis will be placed on the means to strengthen the policy advocacy capacity of businesswomen's associations in the MENA region.
<b>11h15-11h30</b>	<b>Coffee Break and Group Photo (selected press interviews possible)</b>
<b>11h30-13h00</b>	<b>SESSION 2: Improving access to non-financial business support services</b> <b>Chair:</b> Mr. Alexander Böhmer, Head of Programme, MENA-OECD Investment Programme, OECD <b>Keynote Speaker:</b> Ms. Lois Stevenson, President, LASMA Consulting, Ottawa, Canada <b>Discussants:</b> Ms. Saloua Karkri Belkeziz, Founder and Honorary President, <i>Association des Femmes</i>

	<p><i>Chefs d'Entreprises du Maroc</i> (AFEM), CEO, GFI Maroc, Morocco</p> <p>Ms. Joni Simpson, Specialist &amp; Global Coordinator, Women's &amp; Youth Entrepreneurship, Small Enterprise Programme, International Labour Organization</p> <p>Ms. Madina Mohamed Bourhan, Director, One-Stop-Shop, National Investment Promotion Agency, Djibouti</p> <p>Ms. Giulia Corinaldi, Mentoring Programme Manager, Cherie Blair Foundation, United Kingdom (written contribution)</p> <p>Ms. Deema Bibi, CEO, INJAZ, Jordan</p> <p><b>Roundtable Discussion</b></p> <p>This session will examine the role of business support services in accelerating SME and entrepreneurship development in the MENA region. Emphasis will be placed on the benefit of establishing tools to ensure women entrepreneurs' access to support services. The role of various actors, including women's enterprise centres, business development centres, chambers of commerce and other institutions, will also be discussed against the background of existing programmes and measures.</p> <p>Non-financial business support services provide assistance to entrepreneurs and firms in support of business operations and development. They can range from technical services to assisting in daily operations (bookkeeping, IT services, etc.), to more strategic advisory services such as mentoring, coaching and counselling. Governmental, non-governmental and private sector actors, or a mix thereof, provide business support services. In many countries, targeted mechanisms such as marketing campaigns or gender-sensitive training of staff aim to improve take-up of services by female clientele.</p> <p>The availability and reach of business support services vary widely across the MENA region. Some countries have strongly established networks of SME support agencies, enterprise centres and business advisory bureaus, while the concept of business support services is nascent in others. Targeted strategies to assist women entrepreneurs have been put in place in several countries of the region.</p>
<b>13h00-15h00</b>	<b>Lunch Break</b>
<b>15h00-18h</b>	<p><b>SESSION 3: Main findings of the reviews of selected MENA economies on policies, institutions and programmes supporting women's enterprise</b></p> <p><b>Chair:</b></p> <p>Ms. Nicola Ehlermann-Cache, Senior Policy Analyst, Women's Business Forum Project Manager, MENA-OECD Investment Programme, OECD</p> <p><b>Keynote Speaker:</b></p> <p>Ms. Soukeina Bouraoui, Executive Manager, Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR), Tunisia</p> <p><b>Discussants:</b></p> <p>Mr. Hazem Shunnar, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of National Economy, Palestinian Authority</p> <p>Ms. Lama Al Sulaiman, President, Khadijah bint Khuwalid Center for Businesswomen, Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Saudi Arabia</p> <p>Ms. Najat Jumaan, Director of Business Women Department, General Federation of Trade Industry and Commerce, Yemen</p> <p>Ms. Hala Hattab, Lecturer in Business Administration, The British University in Egypt,</p>



	<p>Egypt</p> <p>Ms. Riadh Zghal, President, <i>Association Tunisienne pour l'Entrepreneuriat et l'Essaimage</i> (ATUPEE), Tunisia</p> <p>Ms. Malika Ben Mahi, President, <i>Association Marocaine pour la Promotion de la Femme Rurale</i> (AMPFR), Morocco</p> <p>Mr. Nabil Abdo, Consultant, International Labour Organization Regional Office for Arab States, Lebanon</p> <p>Ms. Hana Uraidy, Director, Cross Cutting Support, Jordan Enterprise Development Corporation (JEDCO), Jordan</p> <p><b>Roundtable Discussion</b></p> <p>The reviews of selected MENA economies for the <i>Inventory of Policies, Institutions and Programmes Supporting Women's Enterprise in the MENA Region</i> bring together practical information on the support available for women entrepreneurs. They are intended to provide a basis for analysing gaps in policy and programme support, making recommendations for improvement, and continually monitoring progress. The draft reviews have been prepared by the Tunisia-based Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR) with the support of the MENA-OECD Investment Programme. National task forces comprised of representatives from governments, the private sector and academia/NGOs are being established to complete the inventories, continually update them and monitor progress.</p> <p>This session will allow participants to review the preliminary findings of the inventories and discuss how they can be used on the local level as a policy advocacy tool. It is intended that the session will result in the development of preliminary recommendations for improving policy and institutional support for women entrepreneurs in MENA economies. These recommendations could feed into the work of the OECD Initiative on Gender Equality in Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship (<a href="http://www.oecd.org/document/31/0,3746,en_2649_34819_47860895_1_1_1_1,00.html">http://www.oecd.org/document/31/0,3746,en_2649_34819_47860895_1_1_1_1,00.html</a>).</p>
18h00	<b>Meeting adjourns</b>
<b>28 SEPTEMBER</b>	
9h30-11h00	<p><b>SESSION 4: Strengthening women's access to markets</b></p> <p><b>Chair:</b></p> <p>Ms. Leila Khaiat, First Vice President, Council of Arab Business Women</p> <p><b>Keynote Speaker:</b></p> <p>Ms. Serena Romano, Founder and President, Corrente Rosa, Italy</p> <p><b>Discussants:</b></p> <p>Ms. Kunyalala Maphisa, President, Businesswomen's Association of South Africa</p> <p>Ms. Yomna El Sheridy, President, Business Women of Egypt 21 (BWE21), Egypt</p> <p>Ms. Wafaa Al-Mahdawi, Department of Economics, Mustansiriyah University, Iraq</p> <p>Ms. Andrea Lewis, Labour and Governance Advisor, U.S. Mission to the OECD</p> <p>Ms. Khedidja Belhadi, President and Founder, <i>Association des Algériennes Managers et Entrepreneurs</i> (AME), Algeria</p> <p>Ms. Miriam Koreen, Deputy Director, OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs and Local Development</p>

	<p><b>Roundtable Discussion</b></p> <p>A number of policy tools and actions exist to improve access to markets for SMEs and entrepreneurs, including women entrepreneurs. For example, mechanisms to disseminate business-related information— economic, legislative and regulatory— to entrepreneurs and owners can help them identify and exploit new markets. Such information may apply to tax or export regulations, licensing procedures, public procurement opportunities, or market information. Information can be disseminated by institutions such as business development centres or by internet portals, which provide practical and up-to-date information to enterprises.</p> <p>Some countries have adopted public procurement regulations to improve women's access to markets. These provisions seek to ensure that women-led firms either have an advantage in accessing public procurement contracts, or are awarded a certain percentage of all public procurement contracts. Government contracts can be beneficial if favorable treatment is given to businesses who involve women-led firms in their supply chains. Women-led firms participating in a supply-chain then have increased access to international markets, giving them a more stable client base, and increasing their credibility with financial institutions.</p> <p>Encouraging women's participation in trade fairs, or conducting targeted export training programmes, are other examples of mechanisms to improve women's access to markets.</p> <p>This session will examine successful models and mechanisms to expand women's access to information and markets, and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of various policy options. Discussants will provide examples of programmes implemented in developing countries and will discuss their applicability to the MENA region.</p>
<b>11h00-11h15</b>	<b>Coffee Break</b>
<b>11h15-12h45</b>	<p><b>Session 5: Research and data collection: state of play and priority areas for improvement</b></p> <p><b>Chair:</b> MENA Representative (tbd)</p> <p><b>Keynote Speaker:</b> Ms. Susan Joeques, Senior Program Specialist, Middle East and North Africa Regional Office, International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Egypt</p> <p><b>Discussants:</b> Ms. Latifa Echihabi, Director, ANPME, Morocco (tbc) Private sector MENA representative (tbd) Ms. Mariarosa Lunati, Head of Section, Entrepreneurship, Business and Globalisation, OECD Statistics Directorate Mr. Paul D. Reynolds, Professor, George Washington University, Washington DC</p> <p><b>Roundtable Discussion</b></p> <p>Strong economic and demographic data allow governments to put in place informed, evidence-based public policies, institutions and support programmes. As underlined in recent research, a number of survey-based indicators on entrepreneurship have been developed by international organisations to better understand private sector development performance in MENA economies, but these do not compensate for the significant information and data deficit in the region (Lois Stevenson, 2010). Where economic and demographic statistics are collected by national statistics offices, they are often not</p>

	<p>harmonised and do not allow for cross-country comparisons.</p> <p>In addition, the quality of gender-dissaggregated data varies considerably across MENA economies. In some cases, gender-dissaggregated data is simply not collected; in others, national differences in methodologies, definitions, or time series make it difficult to conduct cross-country comparisons.</p> <p>This session will examine the current state of data collection and research efforts in the MENA region. It will allow MENA and OECD policy makers to exchange experiences and discuss means of improving the knowledge base.</p>
<b>12h45-13h00</b>	<p><b>CLOSING REMARKS</b></p> <p>Ms. Gabriela Ramos, Chief of Staff of the Secretary General and G20 Sherpa, OECD (tbc)</p>



## About the OECD and the MENA-OECD Investment Programme

The OECD is a unique forum where 34 member governments work together to address the economic, social and environmental challenges of globalisation. The OECD is also at the forefront of efforts to understand and help governments address emerging policy issues such as finding new sources of growth, building skills, and restoring public trust in government and business. The OECD provides a setting where governments can compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practice and work to co-ordinate domestic and international policies. It increasingly engages with a number of non-members who have become important actors in today's global economy.

The MENA-OECD Investment Programme was established in 2005 at the request of participating MENA governments<sup>2</sup> to assist them in implementing business climate reform for investment, growth and employment in the region. It is one of two pillars of the MENA-OECD Initiative on Governance and Investment for Development, which helps MENA governments design and implement reforms to modernise public governance structures, strengthen the business climate and foster transparency—issues which have taken on increasing importance in light of recent events in the region.

### Contacts:

**Nicola Ehlermann-Cache**

Senior Policy Analyst  
MENA-OECD Investment Programme  
Private Sector Development Division  
Directorate for Financial and Enterprise Affairs  
E-Mail: [nicola.ehlermann-cache@oecd.org](mailto:nicola.ehlermann-cache@oecd.org)  
Tel: +33 1 45 24 17 48

**Korin Kane**

Consultant  
MENA-OECD Investment Programme  
Private Sector Development Division  
Directorate for Financial and Enterprise Affairs  
E-Mail: [korin.kane@oecd.org](mailto:korin.kane@oecd.org)  
Tel: +33 1 45 24 97 56

**Joshua Yeremiyew**

Project Assistant  
MENA-OECD Investment Programme  
Private Sector Development Division  
Directorate for Financial and Enterprise Affairs  
E-Mail: [joshua.yeremiyew@oecd.org](mailto:joshua.yeremiyew@oecd.org)  
Tel: +33 1 45 24 98 91  
Fax: +33 1 44 30 61 74

### For more information, please visit:

[www.oecd.org/mena/investment](http://www.oecd.org/mena/investment) (MENA-OECD Investment Programme)  
[www.oecd.org/mena/investment/wbn](http://www.oecd.org/mena/investment/wbn) (OECD-MENA Women's Business Forum)

---

<sup>2</sup> Economies participating in the MENA-OECD Investment Programme are Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian Authority, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.